

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 758

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TAGS: BDIS, HO

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE DEL WEBB CASE

REF: (A) STATE 155645, (B) TEGUCIGALPA 2952

1. FOLLOWING UP ON AMBASSADOR JARAMILLO'S CALL ON FONMIN ROBERTO PALMA GALVEZ TO INFORM HIM OF INTENTIONS OF CONGRESS-MAN RUDD AND SENATOR DECONCINI TO INTERJECT DEL WEBB CLAIM INTO CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE APPROPRIATIONS, EMBOFFS HAVE DISCUSSED THE CASE WITH OTHER GOH OFFICIALS AND REPORT THAT HONDURAS NOW APPEARS TO BE GIVING HIGH PRIORITY TO RESOLVING THE MATTER.

2. CESAR BATRES, SENIOR ADVISOR TO CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL MELGAR, TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THE DEL WEBB CLAIM WAS DISCUSSED JUNE 21 IN A MEETING ATTENDED BY MINFIN ZAVALA, CENTRAL BANK PRESIDENT BUESO AND HIMSELF. WHILE BATRES WAS UNABLE AT FIRST TO GIVE A DATE BY WHICH GOH WOULD REACH A FINAL DECISION, HE ADVISED THAT THE CLAIM WAS BEING GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION WITH A VIEW TOWARD EARLY RESOLUTION. MR. BUESO INDEPENDENTLY CONFIRMED SUBSTANCE THIS MEETING. MR. BATRES ON JUNE 26 FURTHER ADVISED THAT MINISTER OF FINANCE EXPECTED TO CONCLUDE CONSIDERATION BY JUNE 30, ASSUMING SEVERAL MINISTRY

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OFFICES HAD COMPLETED THEIR REVIEWS OF VARIOUS ASPECTS DEL WEBB'S CLAIMS. EMBOFF APPOINTMENT SCHEDULED WITH ZAVALA JUNE 23 DID NOT MATERIALIZE BECAUSE THE MINISTER WAS, ACCORDING TO HIS SECRETARY, CALLED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE FOR A CABINET MEETING. VICE MINISTER PINEDA WHO SUBSTITUTED FOR THE MINISTER AT THIS APPOINTMENT WAS RECEPTIVE, BUT POORLY INFORMED ON THE CASE.

3. IN LUNCHEON MEETING WITH EMBASSY POLOFF MR. BATRES EVINCED LONG FAMILIARITY WITH THE CASE, AS RESULT OF DEL WEBB'S APPROACH TO HIM TO BE THE COMPANY'S LOCAL ATTORNEY IN 1975 (TURNED DOWN BECAUSE IT WAS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST). BATRES MENTIONED OTHER CASES IN WHICH CONSTRUCTION/CONSULTING FIRMS HAD CLAIMED ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS ON GOH CONTRACTS AND IN WHICH AMICABLE SETTLEMENTS WERE REACHED. HE OBSERVED THAT CLAIMANTS IN SOME OF THESE HAVE BEEN FIRMS WITH MORE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE THAN DEL WEBB, AND SETTLEMENTS WERE REACHED WITHOUT THE KINDS OF EFFORTS WHICH DEL WEBB HAS BELIEVED NECESSARY.

4. EMBASSY WISHES TO REITERATE POINTS IT MADE IN PARAGS 3 AND 4
REFTEL B, THAT GOH HAS ASSURED US THAT THE CLAIM IS RECEIVING APPROPRIATE HIGH-LEVEL CONSIDERATION AND THAT ACTIONS THREATENED BY CONGRESSMAN RUDD (AND SENATOR DECONCINI) WOULD BE INOPPORTUNE. WE WOULD LIKE TO ADD THAT US GOVERNMENT LONG-STANDING POLICY IS TO AVOID INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF A CLAIMANT WHEN THE HOST GOVERNMENT HAS A CLAIM UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION.

JARAMILLO

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